

# IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE CAPITOL SEPTEMBER 9-14, 2009

September 9, 2009

## **Dozens and dozens and dozens of initiatives filed with SOS**

*MissouriNet*, Steve Walsh

We've been hearing about the ever-increasing number of petition initiatives being launched by Missourians who want to bypass the General Assembly by taking their issues directly to the people. But you might be surprised at just how many of these initiatives are in the works. For the November, 2010 election ... there have been 64 initiatives filed with the Secretary of State's office. 64!!! To be fair ... not all are still in the works. Of the 64, 10 have been withdrawn and 28 have been rejected as to form. Of the 64 proposed, 22 have been approved for circulation with 7 having been withdrawn post-certification. 64 is a record. The previous record number for initiative petitions filed for a given election cycle was 55 back in 2007-2008.

## **CRN receives update from Rep. Riddle**

*Fulton Sun*, Don Norfleet

**Riddle** told the Callaway Resources Network Thursday at the group's meeting that an interim committee has been studying the issue further prior to the next legislative session and will meet on Sept. 15 at the Capitol in Jefferson City to discuss the proposal.

"I certainly hope we can pass this bill mandating coverage of autism in the next session of the Missouri General Assembly," Riddle said.

The Callaway Resources Network is an informal group of about 30 public and private agencies that provide health and social services to residents of Callaway County. Riddle was asked to speak to the organization to outline recently passed state legislation. Riddle went through a list of new laws affecting health and social service agencies. Riddle said Missouri is a pioneer in legislation requiring newborn screening tests.

September 10, 2009

## **Auto task force delivers report to Gov. Nixon**

*MissouriNet*, Brent Martin

A special task force looking for ways to keep Missouri as a viable player in the auto industry has delivered its report to the governor, even as the industry faces unprecedented problems. Governor Nixon created the Automotive Jobs Task Force by executive order January 13th as questions swirled about the future of the Big Three.

"We certainly knew there were thunder clouds on the horizon," Nixon told the MissouriNet, "but the depth of this and the bankruptcies of the major auto makers and things of that nature, I don't know that anybody could have accurately predicted how dramatic those shifts would be."

The final report recommends Missouri support emerging technology, especially those pushing alternative fuel vehicles, so-called "green" technology. It says the state needs to provide enhanced training of auto workers so that they can adapt to changes in the industry. Resources should be provided to automotive companies that hope to upgrade technology and diversify, according to the report. It also calls for the state to consider new economic incentives to increase the state's competitiveness for new automotive investment. Finally, the report says Missouri must find a way to put vacant auto factories back into production. News about the auto industry in Missouri the past few years has been negative, but Nixon sees some good signs developing.

"I am encouraged about the future in Missouri," Nixon said. "I think the fact that we were able to land Smith Electric, the fact that we are going to a third shift at Ford on their their hybrid Escape, those are all the beginnings of significant good signs for the future of the auto industry in Missouri."

## **Another state rep to resign, this time after receiving new job**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Tony Messenger

Gov. Jay Nixon will appoint **state Rep. Dennis Wood**, R-Kimberling City, to a position on the Stone County Commission this week, according to Missouri House Speaker Ron Richard. Richard said Wood will resign and a special election will be held in February, leaving his southwest Missouri constituents without an elected representative early in the next legislative session.

**NOTE:** Information copied directly from media source

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## **Governor outlines plan to help businesses**

*St. Louis Business Journal*

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon highlighted what his administration has done to help business and promised to do more during his address Thursday at the 51st Annual Governor's Conference on Economic Development in St. Louis. "In the months to come, my administration will outline a concerted and bold agenda to help existing Missouri businesses grow and expand," he said. The governor said he recently began a listening tour among local Missouri businesses, both large and small, about their "needs, their aspirations and their challenges." "That tour will continue in the weeks to come, and those conversations will form the framework of a policy package we submit when the General Assembly returns in January," he said.

## **Veto override attempt likely on Mo. stimulus bill**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, David A. Lieb, AP

Missouri lawmakers likely will try to override Gov. Jay Nixon's veto of a bill that they say was intended to boost public accountability for federal stimulus money and state spending cuts. When he spiked the bill in July, the Democratic governor cited a section providing lawmakers keys to the Capitol dome as a public safety concern. He said the provisions regarding accountability for public funds were similar to ones included in other bills that passed. Sponsoring **Rep. Jason Smith** on Thursday described Nixon's justification as "bogus" and pledged to try to override the veto when lawmakers convene next Wednesday. **House Majority Leader Steven Tilley** confirmed "there's a very, very strong likelihood" the veto override attempt will occur. It already received broad bipartisan support in both bodies," said Tilley, R-Perryville, "and our caucus feels like openness and transparency and accountability in government is important."

**House Minority Leader Paul LeVota**, D-Independence, said last week that he didn't believe any veto overrides were likely. He did not immediately return a call Thursday seeking comment about Smith's legislation.

## **Special Session for Dairy Farmers Not Likely**

*KY3*, David Catanese

Gov. Jay Nixon's administration says it does not anticipate holding a special legislative session to address falling prices for dairy producers, despite a request from head of the state's Dairy Association.

## **Legislative autism committee to meet, at long last**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Virginia Young

House Republican leaders, who promised to come up with a bill improving treatment for autism, have finally scheduled a meeting of the committee set up to study the problem.

A public hearing is set for noon Tuesday in Hearing Room 7 in the Capitol basement. Legislators will be in town that day to prepare for the annual veto session on Wednesday. **Rep. Dwight Scharnhorst**, R-St. Louis County, chairs the panel.

**September 12, 2009**

## **Legislators speak at state's rights event**

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Phil Sutin

A rally Thursday evening in Washington, Mo., calling for more state's rights and less government drew State Sen. Jim Lembke, R-south St. Louis County, and **State Rep. Brian Nieves**, R-Washington, as speakers.

A group, I Heard the People Say, sponsored the event in Rennick Riverfront Park. The group's website said that its mission statement is "As one nation under God, to restore our Republic by educating, informing, and empowering citizens to take action under the freedoms of the U.S. Constitution."



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## **NIXON'S WEEK 35 GRADE: C**

KY3, David Catanese

In last week's grade, The Notebook noted the whispers among Democrats suggesting Gov. Jay Nixon needed a staff shake-up. A few days later, the Post-Dispatch's Tony Messenger caught that Nixon quietly removed Chief of Staff John Watson as the liaison to the Department of Natural Resources. Now, the state's most influential paper is reporting that Nixon is unsatisfied with the performance of his Economic Development director, Linda Martinez, and that she could step down from the position by this week. If Martinez leaves nine months in, what does this say about Nixon's judgment in selecting one his most important cabinet members? While there continue to be ripples behind the scenes in Nixonland, the Governor is attempting to recapture his bipartisan legislative swagger heading into the veto session. He touted a education agreement designed to foster healthcare jobs, appointed Republican **Rep. Dennis Wood** to the Stone County Commission, got tough on insurance companies and began to explore how Missouri's declining auto industry could rebound with a focus on "green jobs." He also heard about a threat from Republicans to override his veto on an economic accountability bill this week. It's probably just a threat (2/3rds is a steep climb) but some GOPers are beginning to smell blood in the water. During it all, Nixon also tellingly ignored the Tour of Missouri. The tea leaves indicate that race fans better enjoy this year, because it could likely be the last. The Governor has to focus on bigger picture items, like jobs and unemployment. Nixon will only have so much time before Missourians pin the sour economy on him. That's just another reason he needs to sort out any problems with Martinez sooner than later.